

Ideologies Present in World War II Era Pulp Magazines

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The snake looms in the foreground. Its open mouth displays venomous teeth, and its tongue tastes the air. Other snakes swim in the murky marsh water toward their two victims. A woman in a red shirt is waist deep in the waters of the marsh, and a man in a tattered shirt stands waist deep in the marsh behind her. A look of true horror is etched on the woman's face as she frantically grips on to the man's forearm and shirt, while the man, as he holds her with one arm and a open mouthed snake with the other, battles the reptiles. Will the man protect the woman from the snakes? Will he survive the fang-bearing serpent by his ear about to strike? What will happen in this gripping scene from the "River of Crawling Death?" The adventure awaits you.

"River of Crawling Death," "Weasels Ripped My Flesh." "Cannibal Crabs Crawl To Kill." "Chewed To Bits By Giant Turtles," "Soft Flesh For The Nazi Monster's Pit In Hell." All of these are real titles to men's adventure magazine articles that were popular in the decades preceding and following the Second World War. The magazine covers feature equally bizarre pictures to accompany the fantastical stories. Although these titles may seem ridiculous and comical by today's standards, they played a key role in many men's entertainment lives of the time.

Someone looking at the magazine racks during the 1920s-1950s would find these types of men's adventure magazines plentiful. All of the magazines featured almost the exact same thing, with only minor modifications. The covers featured a man battling wild animals, rescuing a helpless woman, or performing some other heroic act. "Designed to snare the attention of the Average G.I. Joe settling back into humdrum civilian life after World War II, their gorgeously lurid cover illustrations routinely depicted buxom beauties in shredded tatters of clothes, writhing under the slathering jaws of savage beasts, wild savages or sadistic Nazis" (Strausbaugh, 2004, p.1).

World War II was a war in which the G.I. saw a lot of military action, whether in Europe or in the Pacific. Many of these young men experienced events that folks back home could not relate to. These G.I.s fought in jungles, cities, and battlefields. When they returned home around 1945 they were confronted with a much different world; a society that placed value on much different character traits than what they were used to in the military. World War II was a war that was driven heavily by the rhetoric of powerful politicians of the time. Much propaganda was used to justify the war to the common people. In the rhetoric and propaganda of the day age-old themes of heroism, patriotism, and valor were used to motivate young men to enlist.

Hollywood reinforced these ideals and values during these years. An article about the values in the 1949 film "She Wore A Yellow Ribbon" featuring John Wayne stresses the importance of the media in shaping and reinforcing ideologies of the time. "American values of intelligence and manliness are essential parts of the American psyche that grew out of our history and our belief systems" (Westbrook, 1999, p.1). Being able to defend yourself physically and outsmart your enemy, whether your enemy is a gang of rabid turtles intent to chew you to bits or, in many magazines after WWII, a sadistic Nazi bent on your destruction. This idea that men need to be intelligent, manly, and able to defend themselves was a trait that was, as Westbrook stated, part of America's belief system. Adventure, a chance to be a hero, and an opportunity to fight against the evils of the world were probably some of motivating ideas and factors that influenced the common G.I. These magazines were geared toward the G.I.s who wanted to relive the adventure and heroics that they experienced during the war.

Many of the values that the men had when they came back were in contradiction to many of the values that were starting to form while they were away at war. The war

gave women an opportunity to work outside of the home in the jobs that men had left when they signed up for the war. Realizing that women could do many of the same jobs that the men did no doubt gave them ammunition for powerful movements of the time. Feminism and women's rights were in a phase of moving forward. Women were becoming independent and able to work outside of the house during the war. Previously, society had pressured women to maintain the house and not work outside the house. Many of the women had been reliant on men and their ability to work and generate income. Much of this was due to the fact that women were sometimes thought incapable of fending for themselves, and in many ways being unable to protect themselves.

However, women's freedom experienced during the war was being challenged, yet moving forward in some areas. "After the war the number of working women dropped, but by 1950 it was climbing again, at the rate of a million a year. By 1956, 35 percent of all adult women were members of the labor force, and nearly a quarter of all married women were working" (Layman, 1994, p. 278). Many popular publications and ads of the time are sometimes perceived as being used to limit a woman's rights and freedoms. However, this was not really the case, and women were shown making important decisions for themselves and others. An article by Catalano (2002, p.1) about feminism during the 1950s and women's changing roles argued that women's importance and freedom was growing:

...[Advertisements] pictured a woman fixing an airplane, a job that could potentially save hundreds of lives. Additionally...a 1952 advertisement from National Geographic magazine; a woman telephone operator is pictured with the caption "The Call that Saved a Plane." It proceeded to

tell us of how "the alert, cool thinking operator, Mrs. Lucille Wilson" took heroic action that enabled a plane to have a safe emergency landing.

Though subtle, this ad also showed that married women, such as Mrs. Wilson, were capable of working outside the home and making crucial decisions that save lives at that.

However, the pulp magazines perpetuated gender norms that implied that women were unable to help themselves, that they were reliant on men, and merely "fixtures."

The scholar interested in communication understands the importance of ideologies. While these pulp magazines from the decades before and after World War II may seem inconsequential, they have had a powerful impact on many of the readers. Foss (2004) states "when an ideology becomes hegemonic, it accumulates 'the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others.' It invites 'us to understand the world in certain ways, but not in others.' A dominant ideology controls what participants see as natural or obvious by establishing the norm" (p. 210). These magazines can function in a similar way by creating a dominant ideology among its readers, and thus creating a lens through which they view and make sense of the world.

Even though they might seem comical, silly, or downright hilarious, the covers of these adventure magazines resonated with many men of the era, and played a crucial role in shaping their ideologies. How ideologies are formed, worldviews cultivated, and values shaped are aspects of human development that cannot be overlooked. These ideologies have a profound effect on the way the individual interacts with others and their world. Understanding the perspective, origin of that perspective, and what reinforces that perspective of a person are keys to understanding the person. These magazines told men

what men were supposed to do, how they were supposed to act like and how they should view women, nature, and other races. Among other things, these magazines are significant because they display a patriarchal ideology, an ideology that man must subdue nature, reinforce racial ideologies, and perpetuate the ideology that women were reliant on men.

In this paper I will give a description and overview of the critical method I will use for the analysis. I will be engaging in a detailed description of the magazine covers. I will be touching on such elements as: paper used, painting styles, typical images employed, and layout. After that, I will use the method to analyze my artifact and support my arguments. Lastly, I will review the findings and offer their contributions to the communication field.

Method

I will be using ideological criticism as my method of analysis. Ideological criticism is primarily concerned with discovering how values and beliefs are formed and how they affect a person or group's way of interpreting the world. "In an Ideological analysis, the critic looks beyond the surface structure of an artifact to discover the beliefs, values, and assumptions it suggests. An ideology is a pattern of beliefs that determines a group's interpretations of some aspect(s) of the world" (Foss, 2009, p. 209). An ideology is like a lens that groups and individuals look through and see their world. By understanding a group's set of beliefs and values a more in depth and accurate understanding of how that group interprets and perceives its world can be achieved.

Ideological Criticism has had contributions from many communication scholars. Sonja Foss, Philip Wander, Michael McGee, and Raymie McKerrow will be the scholars

that I will be primarily using in my analysis for this paper. These scholars have contributed to the field by writing many articles on the topic of ideologies, rhetoric, process of analysis, and theory, all of which can be used practically to analyze an artifact such as magazine covers. Considering that I will be looking at an artifact that will involve more patriarchal ideologies that will come into conflict with feminist ideologies I will also be drawing from theorists and writers of feminism, primarily work by Karlyn Campbell and Christina Catalano.

A mental framework is a way to think about ideologies. When a person or group of people perceives the world differently than another group their mental framework is at work. This determines what a person or group will consider “right” or “wrong.” Wander, in his essay “The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism,” states that “more than ‘informed talk about matters of importance,’ criticism carries us to the point of recognizing good reasons and engaging in right action. What an ideological view does is to situate ‘good’ and ‘right’ in an historical context, the efforts of real people to create a better world” (2004, p. 111). Wander’s quote shows the importance of ideologies and that they have an impact on the making of decisions. A mental framework is a way that humans perceive the world, and make decisions concerning it. This will change how someone responds to an event, or in the case of this paper, a magazine. Whether they perceive it in a positive way or in a negative way will determine how they respond to it.

I will be discovering the ideologies that are being presented in the artifact. One way of looking at ideologies is how they affect the receiver, and consequently how their lens will change how they view the world. However, because it is difficult to find out how the readers of these magazines actually viewed the world, and what their thoughts

were on the magazines I will be looking at what the magazines themselves tried to present.

Ideologies also change the way people use language to describe the world, events, or ideas. Language is a powerful way in which perceptions, values, and beliefs are reinforced. McGee writes that “human being are conditioned, not directly to belief and behavior, but to a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reason, or excuse for behavior and belief” (2005, p. 455). These concepts function in a way that an ideology does, dictating beliefs and behavior. In the case of analyzing magazine covers from the 1950s, looking at how language is employed to describe the adventures the men engage in. Language will also show how men, or at least the men that read these particular magazines, view their world. Do they view their world as a dangerous place? A place they must conquer and bring into submission? All of these are questions that can be answered with a careful reading of the artifact in question and with a careful reading and analysis of the language used.

Ideological Criticism is interested in values and how artifacts can express a value through it. Most everything has a value that it expresses. Even a building, which might seem void of a value, has a value attached to it. A building might feature many windows. This might be an indicator that being able to see the outdoors is valuable. A building that is made out of granite might be saying that strength and stability is a value. Something like a magazine cover contains many values, some of which are very insightful when trying to discover the values of the audience. In this paper I will be looking carefully for values that are portrayed in the covers of these magazines. These values will be discovered and unearthed through a careful analysis of the artifact.

Ideological Criticism goes about revealing these beliefs, values, and ideologies in an artifact with a systematic way of analyzing it. I will be using this method in my analysis, which will include: identifying the presented elements, the suggested elements, and then formulating an ideology.

The first step involves an in depth look at the physical elements in the artifact. Foss (2009) states that your task as the one analyzing an artifact “is to examine individual signs that point to ideological tenets in the artifact, working back to the often implicit ideology through the rhetorical content and form of the artifact”(p. 214). For my project I will record all the physical components of the magazine, which includes color, composition, arrangement of images, text, major arguments, shapes and other similar characteristics.

The next step in the ideological criticism process involves identifying elements that are suggested in the artifact. “In the second step of ideological criticism, the critic articulates ideas, references, themes, allusions, or concepts that are suggested by the presented elements” (Foss, 2009, p.216). The first step seeks to merely describe the elements that are seen, but the second step actually attempts to discover how these presented elements might suggest elements that might not be apparent upon first viewing. This gets closer to discovering ideologies in the artifact, but in reality its main function is to look at how the elements presented in the artifact might generate suggested ideas or concepts.

Lastly, the “critic groups the suggested elements into categories and organizes them into a coherent framework that constitutes the ideology you suggest is implicit in your artifact” (Foss, 2009, p.217). In this step I will be trying to find themes that are presented in the covers of the magazines. I will be looking at how suggested elements in

the artifact are conveying a message, and in turn formulating an ideology. In this step I will be primarily working with the suggested elements, and analyzing them to discover what ideologies are present. This step will focus on themes, ideas, or other suggested elements that appear often, and thus can be clustered into implicit ideologies.

Description of the Artifact

“Pulp-fiction magazines -- or the pulps, as everyone called them--were monthly or biweekly collections of stories printed on the cheapest wood-pulp paper that could be run through a press without ripping. Their covers, however, were reproduced in color on more expensive coated stock because the gripping, often steamy artwork sold the magazines” (Stewart, 2003). “Pulp” referred to the type of paper that the magazine was made of, although, as the quote by Stewart states, the covers were made of nicer and higher quality paper. The paper was used in these magazines because it was cheap, around 25 or 35 cents, and thus its attractiveness for the manufacturers. However, the fact that it was cheap meant that the paper was of poor quality. The ink would sometimes bleed, and the color would not be of that great quality.

The magazines were similarly titled, with “Man” being in practically all of them. They were most often titled simply *Man’s Life*, *Men in Combat*, *Man’s Story*, or *Man’s Combat*. The titles were either written in black ink, red ink, yellow ink, or in white with a block of color surrounding it. The font used was typically simple. Sans serif font and serif font were both used in the titles.

The cover drawings of the “pulp magazines” contain fairly uniform types of artwork. This artwork is supposed to grab your eye and make you want to look more closely at the magazine, and then read the story that is associated with the cover art. The

paintings used exaggeration, bright colors, and eye-catching situations and scenes to get the prospective reader to look and hopefully buy the magazine. It is important to look at whom the painters got their inspiration from, and from which illustrators and painters they were influenced by.

Influenced by such notable American illustrators and painters as Winslow Homer, Howard Pyle, N. C. Wyeth, and even Edward Hopper, the pulp-art masters understood the mystique and hypnotic allure of verisimilitude. While the work of such artists as Rafael de Soto, Norman Saunders, H. J. Ward, and Walter Baumhofer was often more impressionist-real than photo real, each artist stressed the importance of including enticing, exactly rendered details (torn blouses, visible garter snaps, silky stockings and slippers, windswept hairdos) to make women far sexier than even any comparable pinup by Petty or Vargas. The men in the paintings played one of two basic roles--hero or villain--but the painters' genius for fluid gesture gave them depth and breadth beyond their cardboard status. Even the most rigidly posed compositions were kinetic, because simulating motion was the essence of this art. While most facial expressions were limited to four emotions--anger, terror, shock, or surprise--each individual characterization spoke volumes about the respective narratives. The eyes were especially meaningful. This was a genre where every nuance was expressed through eye contact with the reader. (Heller, 2003, p.109)

As Heller states, the artists gave careful and thought out consideration to their paintings and how they could entice the consumer. The covers usually contain a frozen frame of an action scene. Bright colors like reds, blues, and yellows are used. The painters typically

painted the cover and an article or story was subsequently written up, sometimes based loosely on a real event or sometimes just made up.

In almost all of the covers featuring the hero a man is depicted. The men are white. He is usually clean-shaven with short-cropped hair that is usually blond or brown. The men featured in the magazines tend to be physically well built, with broad shoulders, large chest, and muscles, and in his late twenties to mid thirties. His face was usually in some sort of aggressive, surprised, or shocked state, with his mouth open, or sometimes with his teeth clenched. The man's face sometimes would appear surprised, but at the same time resolved. Almost always, the man's hand is lifted up to the level of his face either wielding a stick, a knife, or a weapon as he is fighting off wild animals, or doing something else "heroic."

The covers mostly featured the outdoors. A jungle scene or a water scene seemed to be the most popular, with the foliage or the water in the background. If water was featured, it was typically in a state of motion, churning, or rushing. Also, scenes of war were portrayed in the covers. These scenes of war depicted identifiable World War II era battles painted with GIs often engaged in hand to hand combat. If the covers did not feature jungle or water scenes then dark city corners, scientist lairs, or abandoned buildings were used. This covers made use of the typical horror scene, with dark and forbidding features of the city at night.

In many "pulp" there were no villains featured. However, most covers did feature a villain that was harassing a woman. "An all-too-common ingredient in the storytelling formula was a stereotypical villain, whether a demented scientist with bad teeth and thick glasses or a snarling Asian crime lord in a pigtail presiding over a torture chamber" (Stewart, 2003, p.54). The villains were sadistic, who seemed to enjoy

torturing women. These types of covers also typically featured a male “hero” who was in the process of rescuing the woman.

Women were prominently featured in the magazine covers. The women were typically white with blond hair. She appears to be very American, with all of the features that are typically associated with idealized American women of the time. Idealized American women of the time were typically blond or brunette with an hourglass body shape. The actresses Betty Grable, Marilyn Monroe, and Elizabeth Taylor, and the iconic “Gibson Girl” would be similar to the women painted on the covers, although the paintings were typically exaggerated. The women in the magazines wore makeup, had red lipstick, and tended to have their hair done up. Although they might have looked good, they were almost always in distress, unconscious, or screaming, while the man was rescuing them from whatever it was that was making them be in danger. The women in the covers were wearing revealing attire that is either tattered, unbuttoned, or in the process of coming off. The most common clothing type was a red blouse or dress that revealed some skin.

I will briefly describe three covers that I think are typical of the time and that represent the majority of the cover themes. The following covers made use of bright and eye-catching colors, enticing paintings, and shocking titles that made you want to read more.

The first is a painting in *Man's Story* titled “Soft Flesh For The Nazi Monster's Pit In Hell.” Both the magazine publication name and the story title were capitalized. The magazine's name was in red and the story title was in yellow and was located in the lower right hand area of the cover. Four women in tattered dresses are featured, with three of them chained to a wall in the background, while the one in the red dress was tied

to a wooden mill. The woman in the red dress is screaming, and looks frightened. A German man without his shirt on and with a Nazi swastika prominently featured on his helmet and armband was pouring gasoline at the tied woman's feet. The German had a grin on his face and seemed to be enjoying his task at hand. There is a second German in the cover. He is an officer and is lighting his cigarette with a lighter, and he is standing close to the gasoline.

The second magazine is titled "Man's Life," and the title is located in the upper left hand corner of the cover. The title of the story is "Chewed To Bits By Giant Turtles." Below the title there is a man fending off turtles with a knife while he is holding an unconscious woman, who, not surprisingly, is in a red shirt. The turtles are leaping out of the marsh onto the man, attempting to bite him. The hero has short-cropped brown hair and is shirtless. His face is rugged yet clean-shaven. This represents many of the covers; a shirtless man fighting animals in the jungle. The beasts were portrayed as ferocious killers, although they might have merely been turtles, beach crabs, or some rodents.

The last cover is one that shows two men fighting on top of a World War II era tank. This is a cover to the *Men in Combat* magazine and is titled "Kill-Cruise of the Cast-Iron Fortress." Both men are in military apparel, and one man is standing and holding a rifle above his head ready to strike the other man who is wielding a long knife as he is hanging out of the tank's cockpit. A presumably dead soldier is seen lying over the top of the tank's gun. Although it is not very apparent, a German military symbol is seen on the tank, making it safe to assume that the tank is German and the man standing holding the rifle is an American soldier.

Application

Themes of the covers were presented over and over again. The way that these themes were applied would vary a little bit to keep the reader interested in new stories, but the major themes seemed to remain the same.

The importance of strength was a major theme in the covers. This element is suggested through the use of muscular rugged men in the covers. The men were well built, and were shown doing things that required power. Not only were they shown to need physical strength, but psychological strength as well. This was suggested by the painting of the men's faces as being in control and not afraid. The cover paintings of the man fending off the attacking weasels, crabs, or turtles provide textual evidence of this. The cover depicts the man fighting the animals, while at the same time exhibiting the power and masculinity it takes to do so. He is seen without a shirt, which displays his muscles, and more importantly, rugged strength. Although the men's faces sometimes appeared surprised or angry, they had a certain resolve that pointed to the fact that emotional and psychological strength was suggested. The "hero" in the cover is not shown fleeing the scene; rather he is shown facing the villain or fighting off the animals.

The scenes used in the covers suggested danger. Most of the scenes were not of nice places, but rather places that were dangerous and unsafe. The dark city street, the snake infested jungle swamp, or the torture chamber all suggested that the world of the "pulp" was a dangerous place and not one to take lightly. Furthermore, the axis powers were used a lot. German prisons, camps, and other places would remind the soldiers of the western front, while Japanese torturers would remind them of the dangers of the pacific theatre.

The world as a violent place was also a suggested theme, and rarely in the covers were violent scenes not depicted. If there was an animal present it was trying to eat the

humans. If a villain was featured, then violence was imminent for the victim. Violence was often accompanied with images or text that reinforced its value, either by implicitly or explicitly stating that it was needed to be brave, protect others, or receive glory. Weapons were present in some of the covers, mostly being knives, pistols, or rifles. Some of the weapons were more sinister, and were mostly wielded by the villains. These included meat cleavers, torture tools, and other devices.

War was another theme that was present in the covers. With the World Wars during the heyday of pulp magazines it comes as no surprise. The war stories focused on the brave acts of one or a few soldiers, and did not seem to recount battles from a historical perspective. As I said before, the stories were often written up after the cover was drawn. The cover may be drawn showing a battle, and a story that may or may not be historical would be written. Many of the battles during the wars were recounted in various ways, and depicted different outcomes and heroes.

The “pulp” provided readers with vivid images of colorful stories. However, many ideologies are presented in the covers that might not appear without a more in-depth reading of the artifact. These covers, which were “adorned with bawdy and violent cover imagery as well as sexually explicit advertisements” (Strange and Loo, 2002, p. 11), contained elements that reinforced and perpetuated ideologies on women, other races, nature, and a man’s role.

These eras offered more and more advancement for women. But the ideologies in the magazines did not seem to support that fact. Rather, the elements in the magazines presented a patriarchal ideology. This ideology stresses the dependence of women on men, and their inability to be dependent on themselves. This has a limiting effect on women’s agency and ability to pursue their own goals.

How do the covers perpetuate of this patriarchal ideology? In order to understand how this ideology might be presented, it would be beneficial to look more closely at what patriarchy is and its functions in society. Patriarchy stresses the importance and supremacy of the male figure in the house or society. It can function in many different ways, from men feeling the need to domineer women, men taking on power roles, or feeling the need as fathers to be the head of the household. It reduces a woman's independence, power, and places most of the responsibility on the shoulders of the male figure. Patriarchy has been around for a long time, and is shown in modern areas such as pay difference between women and men, the man being referred to as the head of the household, and the woman taking on the man's name.

The causes of patriarchy are controversial. The origins of it are at the heart of much of the feminist ideology and arguments. Goldberg (1999) proposes a few different ideas as to why patriarchy exists and what contributes to the "male assumption of hierarchical roles, dominance and status." These include such elements as "gender divisions of societal expectations, effects of psychophysiology on social environment, sexual differentiation, and social roles, redefinition of patriarchy, and the economic and social reasons for patriarchy" (p. 1). Campbell (1973) describes how the "the sex role requirements for women contradict the dominant values of American culture –self-reliance, achievement, and independence" (Campbell, 2005, p. 510). All of these values are portrayed in the covers of the pulp magazines and seem to be in contradiction to the values that society places on women. How patriarchy is presented in the magazines can be understood through an ideological critique of images, scenes, and the roles of men and women in them.

I think that the magazines portray this ideology in a few different ways.

Women being perceived as unable to fend for themselves or unable to protect themselves can be seen as a reason and rationale for men needing to domineer women. This can result in being repressive to women, and limiting their potential. McKerrow (2005, p. 119) discussed this concept in his article, and in it he writes about how the “the discourse which flows from or expresses power functions to keep people “in their place.” The covers function to keep women in their place in society, politics, and other areas of life. In the magazine covers the women were often times tied up quite literally, and unable to protect themselves. This image of woman being tied could in a way translate over to the real world as the woman being tied up when it comes to decision making, her sense of agency, political power, and other aspects of life.

The scenes that are used also play a role in reinforcing an ideology of the roles for the genders. If you notice, no scenes from the house are presented in the covers. Rugged outdoors, dark city streets, and evil scientist lairs are illustrated as being a man’s world, a world in which the man can survive through his masculinity and strength. What happens when a woman is shown in this world? She is taken advantage of, tied up, or unconscious. According to the covers, the world outside the house is clearly a dangerous place that is not made for a woman. When she does venture out into this world it is the man who must protect her and bring her back to safety.

The most obvious covers that present this patriarchy and show women as being powerless exist in the Nazi covers. The cover that I described regarding the women being tortured by the Germans provides a text which to look at. A common scene during the 1940s and 1950s showed women being domineered by the Germans and in some way taken advantage of. The women are almost always tied up, and although the covers might not argue this type of treatment is right, the women are always appearing powerless to

help themselves. This powerlessness of the women points to the fact that they must have the “hero man” protect them, and in order to protect them they must have higher status, ability to act, and control. All are parts of patriarchy.

A racist ideology is also present in many of the covers, and I think that this is one of the more prevalent ones. The magazines were often used to reinforce the reason for going to war, and offer fantasies of what might happen if we did not go to war. World War I and World War II were wars that had complicated motivating factors. However, in order to get young men to go out and potentially die a more stirring form of motivation was often times needed. This was clearly exemplified through some of the propaganda used during the war.

The use of women in propaganda was established early in the war, when posters (and later cinema) became vital state tools in promoting a vision of the war as one where soldiers defended women, as well as children and their homeland. The British and French response to the alleged German “Rape of Belgium”, when reports of German atrocities were highlighted, was to cast Belgian women in the role of defenseless victims, needing to be saved and avenged. One poster used in Ireland featured a women standing with a rifle in front of a burning Belgium with the heading “Will you go or must I?”

Indeed, women were present on recruiting posters throughout the war, applying moral and sexual pressure on men to join up or else be diminished. This, along with Britain’s white feather campaigns, where women were encouraged to give the feathers as symbols of cowardice to non-uniformed men, as well as women’s involvement as recruiters for the armed forces, was designed to “persuade” men

into the armed forces. Furthermore, some posters presented young and sexually attractive women as rewards for soldiers (Wilde, 2011, p. 1)

In the magazine covers the villains were often depicted as being Japanese or German. Like the “Soft Flesh For The Nazi Monster’s Pit In Hell” cover, Germans were depicted as brutal, ugly, and evil. Many more magazine covers portray them as being less than human and barbarians. The women depicted in the magazines and the propaganda are both very similar in appearance. During a time in which race was often blamed for the problems of society, it was not surprising that many of societies claimed superiority in regards to race. Although the U.S. has a fairly diverse racial landscape, it nevertheless participated in its own form of racism.

In many covers a young woman is being abused or tortured by swastika bearing Germans. Designed to undoubtedly rile up young men, this theme portrayed Germans as being violent who wanted to inflict pain on women for their own pleasure. One of the important concepts to be aware of is the fact that the “American girl” is the one being abused.

Based on the works of popular pre-war illustrators like Howard Chandler Christy and Charles Dana Gibson, the American woman was the most attractive woman in the in the world. Her outstanding wit, beauty and intelligence made her the only suitable mate for the supposed racially superior American man. With the onset of war, however, the once entertaining romantic scenarios in popular monthlies and weeklies now represented what America stood to lose, and the “American Girl” would make the transition from magazine illustrations to war poster with minimal

alterations. As the war raged on, many Americans began to express fear about the possibility of German invasion, and the American woman became threatened by a perceived racially inferior force. While countless posters would explicitly address this concern, others would more subtly claim the American female as the rightful property of the American man (Rother, 2008, p.2).

In much of the same way the covers of the pulp magazines perpetuated the belief of racial superiority. By depicting American men as the heroes rescuing the girl and the villains as being other races such as Japanese and Germans, the magazines helped to reinforce racial hierarchies. The covers portrayed Germans, Africans, Japanese, and other racial groups in a stereotypical way. In most of the covers other races are portrayed in negative ways, and are seen abusing the pride of the American man: the American girl.

The covers also perpetuated an ideology that man must subdue nature and the natural environment. By making normally harmless animals like turtles, crabs, and small rodents attack the cover hero the magazines create a false sense of the danger of nature. By creating this ideology the magazines present the need to subdue animals and nature.

Although some of the magazines show dangerous animals attacking the hero, most of the magazines show the man being attacked by harmless animals. This is saying that nature is more dangerous than it really is. The magazines create an ideology that nature must be beaten back, and that it poses a threat. Ideologies create beliefs and those beliefs may or may not result in action. By making these animals dangerous, the magazines create a belief that man should be afraid of nature and take an aggressive stance toward it.

The fact that nature appears more violent and dangerous may also play in the decisions made regarding it. If this perception is shared by many people then conserving nature or protecting animals may not seem as important or necessary.

Conclusion

Analyzing these covers from the early part of the century can provide us living today a way of understanding how media affects perceptions, a way to look at media images as containing ideologies, and some of the influences that may have affected generations living in that era. Those ideologies went on to affect their offspring and how they view their own world. These ideologies affect government, wars, family life, and society values. The importance of understanding and being able to identify ideologies and how they work in our lives should not be understated.

Although the covers do provide an entertainment quality and may not have been originally intended to contain these ideologies, a close reading of the text has shown that ideologies exist regardless of the original intent. The main ideologies that I found were gender role ideologies, racism, and views of the world and nature.

The use of ideological criticism to analyze a text is a systematic way of finding ideologies. Through this method I have been able to understand to a fuller extent the ideologies presented in a form of media such as the pulp magazine covers from the 1920s-1950s. This method provides us all with a very good way at taking a more critical view of anything and discovering the present ideologies.

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